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A FREE RESPONSE APPROACH TO DEVELOPING
PRODUCT-SPECIFIC CONSUMPTION SITUATION
TAXONOMIES

Russell W. Belk

#452

College of Commerce and Business Administration
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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Russell W. Belk
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ABSTRACT

This paper examines a method for assessing the effects of consumption situations on a consumer's product choices. It is argued that a free response approach be adopted for constructing product-specific consumption situation taxonomies in order to examine the homogeneity of such situational effects on different consumers. The proposed method is illustrated in the context of consumer clothing choice and the advantages, uses, and limitations of the method are discussed.

A FREE RESPONSE APPROACH TO DEVELOPING PRODUCT-SPECIFIC
CONSUMPTION SITUATION TAXONOMIES

THE NEED TO CONSIDER CONSUMPTION SITUATIONS IN PRODUCT PLANNING

In many product categories a knowledge of a consumer's general traits, desires, and attitudes is not enough to be able to predict the types of products which are appealing or the attributes which are sought in selecting such a product. Stefflre and Barnett (1968), Yankelovich (1964), and Haley (1968) have all urged that the specific consumption situation anticipated for a product is an important part of the consumer choice process. Sandell (1968) demonstrated that beverage preferences may differ markedly depending upon the situation in which the beverage is consumed. Evidence of consumption situation effects have also been found in studies of consumer preferences and choices of leisure activities (Bishop and Witt, 1970), fast foods (Miller, 1974; Belk, 1975b), soft drinks (Beardon and Woodside, 1976; Sharpe and Granzin, 1974), snack products (Lutz and Kakkar, 1974; Belk, 1974b), Beer (Beardon and Woodside, 1977), meat products (Belk, 1974a), food products (Kamen and Eindhoven, 1963), mouthwash (Srivastava and Shocker, 1977), and motion pictures (Belk, 1974b).

It may be noted that the products and services above are all non-durables for which the item selected may readily be altered from one consumption situation to another. While there is some evidence that extreme differences in single consumption situations such as choosing a product for either personal use or as a gift, may affect choices of

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some durable goods such as small appliances (Vincent and Zikmund, 1976; Hansen, 1972; Ryans, 1977) and tableware (Grønhaug, 1972), such items are less susceptible to influence from a single consumption situation than are consumer non-durable goods. However it is possible that consumption situations may still exert an influence on consumer purchase decisions when it is not feasible to change products to suit the situation. As Berkowitz, Ginter, and Talarzyk (1977) have illustrated with regard to automobile choice behavior, depending upon the anticipated frequency of various usage situations anticipated for a product, the evaluation of various product attributes desirable in these situations may receive heavier or lighter weights in brand attitudes. That is, consumers may somehow weight their decision criteria for a product which is to serve in multiple consumption situations according to the anticipated frequency or, perhaps, the importance of each situation. If this sort of weighting does take place, even choices of such major durable products as a home may be affected by characteristics of the consumption situations planned for the product. And in instances in which the house is later found to be inadequate for emerging consumption situations such entertaining guests or growing vegetables, the purchaser may be prone to remodel or move.

In addition to influences from consumption situations in the purchase of nondurable and major durable products and services, there are certain minor durable products for which the influence of consumption situations may be recognized in another way. Consider products such as food seasonings, record albums, clothing, and carpentry tools. In these product categories an array of choices may be accumulated in order

to provide a stockpile of readily available choices to draw from when an appropriate consumption situation occurs. The initial purchase of such products may either be in response to an impending single consumption situation (e.g. a dress for an upcoming party) or in response to potential future consumption situations which are felt to be likely to occur and/or to be highly important to be prepared for if they do occur (e.g. guest bed linen). In either case, the good is usually retained in the consumer's inventory for use in appropriate future consumption situations.

The three ways just outlined in which consumption situations may affect consumer purchases may be summarized as:

1. Single use consumption situational effects on nondurables: in which a good is purchased for use in a single rapidly anticipated consumption situation;
2. Multiple use consumption situational effects on major durables: in which a good is purchased which "best" satisfies the various demands of several anticipated consumption situations; and
3. Intermittent use consumption situational effects on minor durables: in which goods are purchased which will be kept in inventory, possibly as part of an array of such goods, for use in those anticipated consumption situations for which they may be appropriate.

Considering all three types of consumption situation influence, there are few, if any product and service purchases which are devoid of potential consumption situation influences. Because consumer purchases may frequently be guided by the match between the consumption situation or situations envisioned for the item being chosen and the consumption situations considered to be appropriate for a given item, it may be erroneous and misleading to assume that a consumer maintains a single evoked set of product alternatives in a fixed product category. Instead

it seems likely that when consumers have clear expectations of the consumption situations in which a product can and will be used, the consumer's evoked set of alternatives is also tied to the set of intended consumption situations envisioned. In these instances an accurate understanding of such notions as "competing products", "salient attributes", and "product position", requires specification of the types of consumption situations which the consumer may have in mind.

WAYS TO CONCEPTUALIZE CONSUMPTION SITUATIONS

The Need for a Taxonomy

Anyone who has attempted to conceptually or operationally deal with situations at a general level has experienced the frustration of trying to specify a construct of enormous breadth and minimal clarity. While we may readily define a situation as the conditions present at a fixed time and place, this does nothing to delineate the specific conditions which comprise a situation. Since the construct of situation must be able to be operationally specified and measured to be of any practical use, some sort of a classification of situations which describes the domain of situations or situational variables seems essential. Two general approaches to developing such a taxonomy would be: A) attempting to classify all possible situations or situational variables, and B) attempting to classify all relevant situations or situational variables affecting a given domain of behavior. Two examples of approach A) are the work of Sells (1963) who developed a list of over 200 situational variables including role expectations, risk, and level of skills required, and, at the other end of the continuum of detail, the work of

Mehrabian and Russell (1974) who developed a classification of three situational properties: pleasure (pleasingness), arousal (excitingness), and dominance (amount of behavioral constraint). Although such efforts to classify all possible situations or situational variables are very useful in developing an understanding of the major situational dimensions which may affect behavior, they suffer two drawbacks. One problem is that to date no single comprehensive and generally accepted taxonomy has been developed. And as Kakkar and Lutz (1975) point out, those general taxonomies which have been developed are not highly appropriate for investigating consumer behavior. The other problem with the general taxonomies is that the situations and situational variables which affect some consumer behaviors (such as choosing a type of liquor to purchase) may be wholly different from those which affect other consumer behaviors (such as choosing a type of laxative to purchase). Because of these difficulties, approach B) of trying to classify all relevant situations or situational variables is appealing.

Relevant situations or situational variables are those which can and do affect a given set of behaviors. If these situations and variables are selected because they affect the behaviors of interest, the potential for developing conceptually rich but pragmatically meaningless situation concepts is reduced or eliminated. And since the question of what types of situations or situational variables exist can then more readily be framed as an empirical question rather than a hypothetical one, there is also greater potential for agreement about a taxonomy once it has been constructed. Therefore specifying a domain of behaviors of interest rather than attempting to construct a grand taxonomy of all situations

or situational variables which may affect consumer decisions, is both more feasible and more useful.

In seeking a domain-specific situational taxonomy in a consumer behavior context we might first specify whether we are interested in situational factors affecting purchase situations, communication situations, or consumption situations. This distinction was suggested by Hansen (1972) and is a useful but potentially misleading one. It is potentially misleading because for all three types of situations we will normally be interested in consumer purchase behaviors. In the case of communication situations we are most often interested in the effect of advertising or other communications (and attendant situational conditions) on future product choice behavior; and in the case of consumption situations we are most often interested in the effect of consumption situational conditions on prior product choice behavior. Obviously the only way in which consumption situations can influence prior behavior is through the consumer's anticipation of these consumption situational conditions while buying. That is, we are interested in those aspects of the consumption situation which enter into the purchase situation because the consumer is envisioning these future conditions while buying. In contrast, the other relevant situational conditions in the purchase situation are likely to be unanticipated by the consumer. Such conditions as the weather, time pressure, shelf arrangements, and mood are purchase situation conditions which are most likely to alter prior purchase intentions when they differ from the purchase situation anticipated when the intentions were formed.¹ Because

¹Sheth (1971) has made the distinction between anticipated and un-anticipated situational conditions somewhat differently.

the effects of anticipated consumption situations such as an upcoming dinner party are by the definition of "anticipated" more stable and recognizable than the effects of unanticipated purchase situations such as a crowded store, by focusing on the purchase effects of anticipated consumption situations we are dealing with situational influences which the consumer can and does give as reasons for a purchase selection.

Within the still large domain of consumer purchase behaviors affected by anticipated consumption situations, "relevant situations" are likely to differ further by product. While the desirability of product-specific consumption situation taxonomies is evident, it is not always clear what the boundaries should be in defining a product or product class. This is because we do not always have a clear understanding of what product items are seen as alternatives for each other in at least some consumption situations. For instance a given consumer may consider Hawaiian Punch and Seven-Up to be alternative beverages when planning for weekend lunches, but this consumer may see one or neither as alternatives when planning for mixes to drink with liquor at a social gathering (Robertson, 1970). For this reason it is important to err on the side of too broad a product set rather than on the side of too narrow a product set when pursuing a product-specific consumption situation taxonomy. Srivastava and Shocker (1977) have recently demonstrated an application of procedures by Steffler (1971) for generating a set of potentially substitutable products. They also found that group interviews were very useful in generating a set of products which met or exceeded each subject's set of potentially substitutable alternatives. Unless a product class suffers little or no perceptual ambiguity, methods such as these should be a prerequisite in seeking broad product groupings for which to pursue con-

sumption situation taxonomies.

Criteria for Taxonomies

The prior discussion is summarized and extended by the following list of criteria for a consumption situation taxonomy:

1. Product Specificity
2. Consumer Relevance
3. Aggregation Potential
4. Decision-maker Relevance.

As already argued, a product-specific taxonomy of consumption situations is more feasible, more manageable, and more useful than a general approach to situation taxonomy. Since consumption situations are infinitely diverse across products, it is especially necessary and desirable that a taxonomy of consumption situations be approached at the product class level.

It is also imperative if a consumption situational taxonomy is to reflect situations or conditions which can and do affect product choice, that the taxonomy be relevant to consumers. For instance if a consumer's purchases of gifts are contrasted in instances in which the consumption situation is either a shared holiday (e.g. Valentine's Day, Christmas) or a person-specific gift-giving occasion (e.g. birthday, wedding anniversary), but the consumer's only relevant considerations are whether the recipient is young or old, and male or female, then the basis for the taxonomy is meaningless. The ultimate translation of this criterion is that the typology should be related to the consumer's actual behavioral differences across situations. A translation of this criterion based on perceptual differences as a basis for situational taxonomy would be weaker since these perceptual differences may or may not be sufficient to cause dif-

ferences in behavior. This would be true in the previous example if the gift-giver indeed distinguished between shared and person-specific gift-giving occasions, but the distinction did not affect gift choices.

The third criterion, that a consumption situation taxonomy has aggregation potential, assumes that individual differences will exist in the consumer behaviors which covary with various situational conditions in a consumption category. Given this assumption, the criterion calls for sufficient homogeneity of situational effects across consumers that most of the situation or situational condition types in the taxonomy affect most of the consumers in a similar manner. With data on consumer responses to a variety of situations, it is an empirical question whether there is sufficient homogeneity of effects for a common situational taxonomy or whether several segments of similar consumers need to be treated separately. It is conceivable for example that children and adults or different groups of adults may differentiate different situations or aspects of situations in selecting clothing to purchase and wear. While a child's clothing selections for play situations may be viewed as for either indoor or outdoor and for summer or winter situations, an adult may select a "play" wardrobe with different outfits for tennis, golfing, skiing, jogging, fishing, hunting, bowling, and other distinct activity types. The criterion of aggregation potential requires that a typology have some generality beyond applying to a single individual with idiosyncratic responses to situations. This means that both the situations or situational variables and the effects of these conditions on consumer choice behavior must be shared.

The fourth criterion requires that a situational taxonomy have

relevance to a marketer or public policy decision-maker. Ideally an identified situational response pattern could be translated into a marketing strategy by designing a product offering and marketing program directed at a particular type of use situation for which few other offerings are seen by consumers to be appropriate. From the point of view of public policy or business, a situational taxonomy could also be relevant because it allows a better understanding of which product offerings actually do compete in the sense of being seen by consumers as alternative solutions to particular types of consumption situation problems (see Day and Shocker, 1976). While it is difficult to envision totally inactionable consumption situational typologies when the other three criteria are met, there are likely to be some typologies which are more readily actionable than others. For instance, consumption situation conditions described in terms of emotional states are likely to be harder to communicate about than are consumption situational conditions described in terms of consumer activities. However taxonomies of consumption situations are generally more actionable than taxonomies of unanticipated aspects of the purchase situation.

Types of Potential Taxonomies

The preceding discussion has referred to the possibility that we might wish to develop taxonomies of either complete consumption situations or else characteristics of situations. As Fredericksen (1972) points out, this distinction parallels the divergence of approaches to studying individual differences by either attempting to develop taxonomies to classify individuals or taxonomies to classify attributes of individuals.

For instance we might classify consumers in toto by using a scheme such as Stone's (1954) categorization of shoppers as apathetic, economic, personalizing, or ethical. Alternatively we might regard any or all of a number of personality trait inventories as comprehensive descriptors of the attributes of individual consumers which cause them to behave differently. Although both taxonomies of situations and taxonomies of situational attributes would potentially be useful, there is one advantage which presently favors the development of taxonomies of situations rather than situational attributes. The advantage is that, especially within a prescribed product class, the domain to be classified is easier to specify when it consists of whole consumption situations rather than characteristics of these situations. Kakkar and Lutz (1975) have developed an interesting set of three situational attribute dimensions (social interaction, personal involvement, and temporal commitment) from factor analysis of responses to 11 original dimensions describing snack product consumption situations, but they recognize that there is little assurance that the original set of dimensions captured all relevant differences between the situations. Although consumption situations for a group of products such as snacks may be diverse, they are certainly easier to recognize and are probably fewer in number than the potential attributes which such situations may possess.

In pursuing a taxonomy of situations, or in pursuing a taxonomy of situational attributes, another decision which must be made concerns the method of classification. Two very broad approaches would be theoretical and empirical classifications. A theoretical derivation would be appealing, but unfortunately the diversity of situational influences

By proceeding in this manner the product specificity and decision-maker relevance criteria for a situational taxonomy are readily met, but the remaining criteria of consumer relevance and aggregation potential are less certain. The remainder of this paper is devoted to illustrating a behavior-appropriateness-based method of deriving product-specific consumption situation taxonomies which satisfy the consumer relevance criterion as well and allow assessment of the aggregation potential of the resulting taxonomy. In fact it is the potential opposition of these last two criteria which motivates this paper. The substantive question considered is whether a taxonomy which is relevant to a consumer can be generalized to having relevance to other consumers. The methodology employed provides a means for answering this question in the context of any product category which the consumer can recognize and in which choices are frequently made.

AN ILLUSTRATIVE STUDY

Method

A study was undertaken in order to demonstrate an approach for developing product-specific consumption situation taxonomies for single individuals. The method employed was based on semi-structured diaries of consumption situation occurrences and corresponding product choices for an intermittent use minor durable. The product context chosen for this illustrative study was warm weather clothing exclusive of underwear and outerwear. Data were collected from a sample of 15 White middle class undergraduate students (7 males and 8 females) at the University of Illinois. All agreed to keep diaries of the clothing which they wore and the "primary" and "secondary" situations in which

argues against a comprehensive theory of these effects. It is, for instance, difficult to imagine a single theory which could capture the purchase influences of consumer mood, shelving arrangements, salesperson's eye contact, and time pressure. As a result, the few theory-derived situational constructs which do exist are limited, intuitive, and relevant primarily to a limited set of consumer responses.² This leaves empirical classification as the most feasible approach and raises the further question of the type of data to be used in generating a taxonomy.

One data approach to an empirical classification of situations would be to gather a variety of descriptive statements about situations of concern and then group situations according to similarities in patterns in group or subgroup responses to these statements. The difficulty with this approach is the same as that with developing taxonomies of situational attributes: the relevant domain is difficult or impossible to identify. A second approach avoids the problems of selecting an attribute set by using multidimensional scaling of similarities data gathered on a set of situations. While this approach avoids the problems of selecting an attribute set, it can become unwieldy with a large number of situations identified in reasonable detail. Also there is no assurance that the perceptual dimensions generated in multidimensional scaling will be related to the behaviors of interest. Another approach which has been suggested by various authors (e.g. Fredericksen, 1972; Belk, 1975a; Price, 1974), is to collect data on the occurrence, probability, or appropriateness of various behaviors relevant in a set of situations.

²Examples are Lavidge's (1966) "circus atmosphere", and Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell's (1968) "precipitating circumstances".

they wore these outfits during a 15 day period. Swimwear, uniforms, and similar highly use-specific outfits were excluded from analysis. Primary situations were operationally defined as "situations (a time and place in which you and possibly others engaged in some activity) in which you wear a particular outfit or item of clothes with primarily that situation in mind." Secondary situations were described as other situations preceding or following this one in which the clothing chosen was also expected to be worn. Subjects were asked to draw on other recent (June to September) clothing consumption situations remembered to supplement the diary data and bring the total number of situations recorded to between 25 and 33. These latter additions accounted for slightly less than one-third of the situations generated and predictably biased the situations sampled toward more prominent and memorable occasions. Consumption situations were considered as they affected selection of an item from a wardrobe rather than selection of an item for a wardrobe, based on the assumption that actual consumption situations are an accurately measureable surrogate for anticipated consumption situations. The implications of this assumption are discussed after presenting results.

Subjects were encouraged to describe each situation in their own words and short phrases, but to include answers to the following questions:

A. Description

1. What was this situation like?
2. What did you do there?
3. Who were you with?
4. Who did you see there?
5. What happened?
6. What were your feelings while there?

B. Special Influences on Clothing

1. What, if any, circumstances influenced your specific choice of clothing?
2. What secondary situations...preceded or followed this one?

C. Major Characteristics

1. What are the major characteristics of this situation?
2. What single word or short phrase would you use to describe this type of situation?

In describing the clothing worn in each situation, the subject was asked to include:

A. Description

1. What color, style, pattern, cut, material, and brand characterize the distinctive features of each item?
2. Which if any of these items do you wear only as a set?

B. Characteristics

1. How did you feel when wearing this clothing in this situation?
2. What are the major characteristics of this group of clothing items?

After subjects had listed situations and corresponding clothing ensembles they were instructed to transfer these designations by number and brief description onto a master matrix in which situations formed the columns and clothing groups formed the rows. The subjects were then asked to fill-in the matrix by rating how appropriate each clothing outfit listed would be for each situation listed, using the following codes:

- 1=Highly Inappropriate (all wrong)
- 2=Somewhat Inappropriate (mostly unsatisfactory)
- 3=Somewhat Appropriate (mostly satisfactory)
- 4=Highly Appropriate (just right).

It was pointed out to subjects that the diagonal of actual situation and

clothing matches need not necessarily be all filled with "4's".

This free-response method of data collection resembles the work of Rosenberg (1977) in studying person perception and the work of Perlin (1976) in studying general situational influences on behavior. The collection of appropriateness measures follows several researchers including Price (1974) and Srivastava and Shocker (1977). In beginning with unstructured subject listings of situations and clothing choices and moving to structured appropriateness ratings, the exploratory advantages of using unconstrained descriptions in the subject's own words are combined with the quantification of this data which is necessary to derive classifications of the consumption situations generated. The appropriateness matrices developed by this procedure were then ready for the within-subject classifications which were to form the basis for comparisons of the generality of the resulting taxonomies across subjects.

Results

Of the several methods of data reduction possible for each of the appropriateness matrices, a factor analysis was chosen, using situations as items and clothing ensembles as observations. Principle components analysis was carried out using an iterative routine to re-estimate communalities. Varimax rotations were performed with eigenvalues and interpretive criteria employed to determine the number of factors ultimately retained. This number varied from two to five factors over the 15 different subjects. Because of space limitations and for the sake of clarity, data will be presented only for the four male subjects whose data resulted

in retaining three factors. Tables 1 through 4 provide summaries of the situation factors obtained for the data from "Andrew", from "Steve", from "Tom", and from "Joe". The most basic comparison of interest across these four subjects is the nature of the situation factors, but where a common situation factor occurs it is also of concern whether the subjects who seemingly employ this type of situation as a determinant of clothing choice, each select the same types of clothing when situations of this type occur. Finally it may or may not be of importance that subjects who react to situations with behavioral similarity also characterize these situations and/or the corresponding clothing choices with perceptual similarity.

While obviously a larger number of subjects are needed for a definitive conclusion about the homogeneity of situational effects within a group of people such as college students, certain common themes emerge from the tabulated results. It may be seen that a social situation factor emerged for each of these subjects, an everyday factor emerged for three of the four subjects, and an outdoor factor also emerged for three of the four subjects. Only the public factor and the impression formation factor were not obtained for more than one of the subjects, and both of these factors were peculiar to "Andrew" (Table 1). The other three subjects in fact demonstrate roughly equivalent factor structures. This similarity is also illustrated by the fact that each of these three subjects see some type of blue jeans as appropriate for each type of situation they encounter, whereas "Andrew", while also wearing blue jeans in the public types of situations, is the only one who commonly wears suits, sports coats, and dress slacks in any of the clothing consumption situations which he currently encounters. Although

TABLE 1

ILLUSTRATIVE SITUATIONAL FACTORS AND CORRESPONDING CLOTHING CHOICES BY "ANDREW"

Factor (% Variance)	Illustrative Situations	Shared Situation Characteristics	Illustrative Clothing Worn And/Or Rated As Highly Appropriate	Shared Clothing Characteristics
1. Impression Formation (64%)	(+) Dinner Date (1st date with person) (+) Flying from California (+) Lunch with Boss (-) Playing Basketball	A Nice Place Want to Make a Good Impression Fancy Setting	3 Piece Plaid Suit Brown Sports Coat & Brown Slacks Long-sleeve Blue Dress Shirt & Blue Dress Slacks	Looked Sharp Made me Feel Good Nice Appearance
2. Public (17%)	(+) Shopping for Clothes (+) First Day of Class (+) Party at a Friend's House (-) Layed Around Apartment All Day	Wanted to Look Good Wanted to Be Comfortable Not Sure Who I'd Meet	Blue Painter's Pants & T-shirt Levi's And Red & White Polo Shirt Dress Blue Jeans & Red Plaid Shirt	Felt Comfortable Functional Normal School Clothes
3. Social (6%)	(+) At Bar With Friend (+) Met a Girl for lunch (+) Went to a Bar With Friends (-) Painting my Apartment	Wanted to Meet Girls A Nice Place Wanted Casual but Neat Look	White Dress Pants & Long Sleeve Dress Shirt Yellow Dress Slacks & White Dress Shirt Brown Knit Slacks & Brown Short Sleeve Shirt	Looked Sharp Felt Good Moderately Dressed-up

TABLE 2

ILLUSTRATIVE SITUATIONAL FACTORS AND CORRESPONDING CLOTHING CHOICES BY "STEVE"

<u>Factor</u> <u>(% Variance)</u>	<u>Illustrative</u> <u>Situations</u>	<u>Shared Situation</u> <u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Illustrative Clothing</u> <u>Worn and/or Rated As</u> <u>Highly Appropriate</u>	<u>Shared Clothing</u> <u>Characteristics</u>
1. Outdoor (49%)	(+) Golf with Brother (+) Visiting Great America Theme Park (+) Day Hiking in Park (-) Dinner with Girl	Active Comfort Important Strenuous	Blue Jeans, Tennis Shoes, & Brown Short Sleeve knit Shirt Blue Jean cut-offs, Blue Sports Shirt, & Sandals Blue Jeans, Yellow Short Sleeve Shirt with Florida Decale	Casual Broken-in/ Shabby Comfortable
2. Social (27%)	(+) Concert with Friend (+) Movie with a Date (+) Bar with Friends (-) Canceing	Crowded Social Situation Hot Chances for Meeting many People	Blue Jeans, Brown Silk Long sleeve Shirt, Brown leather shoes Blue Jeans, Brown Patterned LS Shirt Blue Jeans & SS Blue & Green Pullover	Semi-dressy but practical & cool Acceptable Socially Nice Looking
3. Everyday (9%)	(+) In Class on a Rainy Day (+) Walk alone on a Cold Day (+) Studying Alone (-) Discotheque	Cold Out By Myself In the Morning	Blue Jeans & Blue Ski Sweater Blue Jeans & Olympia Beer Sweatshirt Blue Jeans & Blue Flaid Flannel Shirt	O.k. Looking but Nothing Special Warm, Dry, & Comfortable Casual

TABLE 3

ILLUSTRATIVE SITUATIONAL FACTORS AND CORRESPONDING CLOTHING CHOICES BY "TOM"

<u>Factor</u> (% Variance)	<u>Illustrative Situations</u>	<u>Shared Situation Characteristics</u>	<u>Illustrative Clothing Worn and/or Rated As Highly Appropriate</u>	<u>Shared Clothing Characteristics</u>
1. Outdoor (40%)	(+)Motorcycle Ride to Farm (+)Mechanical Work on Car (+)Hunting (-)Sister's Wedding Reception	Good Time Dirty Outdoor	Jeans, White T-Shirt, Boots Old Jeans, Flannel LS Shirt, Boots Grey T-Shirt, Old Levis, Moccasins & no Socks	Practical Comfortable Expendable
2. Social (26%)	(+)At Bar to Pick up Girls (+)Party at Friend's (+)At a New Bar with Friends (-)Picnic	Night Party Atmosphere Drinking	White Corduroy Levis, Knit Pullover Jeans, Blue cotton LS Shirt White Painters' Pants, Red LS Flannel Shirt	Neat Appearing Comfortable Loose; Not Confining
3. Everyday (11%)	(+)Tennis with Girl (+)Grocery Shopping (+)Poker Games at Friend's (-)Dinner at Restaurant with Girlfriend	Casual Layed Back In Champaign-Urbana	Cut-off Jeans, Cut-off (formerly) LS Flannel Shirt Cut-off Jeans, Sleeveless Shirt Old Levis, Blue T-Shirt, Moccasins	Comfortable Unimpressive Ready for Anything

TABLE 4
ILLUSTRATIVE SITUATIONAL FACTORS AND CORRESPONDING
CLOTHING CHOICES BY "JOE"

Factor (% Variance)	Illustrative Situations	Shared Situation Characteristics	Illustrative Clothing Worn and/or Rated As Highly Appropriate	Shared Clothing Characteristics
1. Social (50%)	(+) Fraternity Party (+) Take Date to Bar (+) Take Date to Movie (-) Go Golfing	Dressy Felt Good Warm	Tan Levis, Blue Print Shirt, Brown Earth Shoes New Levis, Blue Shirt Good Dress Blue Jeans, SS Print Dress Shirt	Sharp Look Good Together Neat
2. Outdoor (37%)	(+) Cube Baseball Game with Friend (+) Brookfield Zoo with Younger Siblings (+) Illinois Football Game with Frat Brothers (-) Appear in Own Court Trial	Outdoor Friendly Fun	Old Jeans, Red, White, & Blue T-Shirt, Converse Gym Shoes Blue Jean cut-offs, Yellow Harms T-Shirt, Bl & Yellow Mike Athletic Shoes Blue Jean Cut-offs, Green T-Shirt	Comfortable Cool Simple & Casual
3. Everyday (6%)	(+) Going to Class (+) Coach for Sorority Football Game (+) Driving to Decatur and Back (-) Go to a Nice Restaurant with Girlfriend & Another Couple	Comfort Important Somewhat Cool Partly Outdoors	Blue Jean Outoffs, Yellow T-Shirt, Nike's White Tennis Shorts, Gym Shoes, Blue & Green Rugby Shirt Faded Blue Oshkosh Pants, Red T-Shirt, Converse Gym Shoes	Casual but Smart Comfortable Nice Combination

the other three subjects show some differences in the clothing selected for each situation type (e.g. Tom prefers boots and Moccasins where Joe prefers athletic shoes), it appears that they would generally feel comfortable if they were to exchange wardrobes and would tend to choose the same types of outfits for a given situation type.

In considering the shared situation characteristics listed in the tables, there is much less agreement evidenced among subjects than there is in the behavioral-appropriateness-based factor structures. This provides at least suggestive evidence that despite similarities in behaviors within situations, the perceptions of these situations are not homogeneous. If at least part of clothing selection is assumed to be imitative this is readily understandable. Subjects may discover for instance what is acceptable clothing to wear in a bar without all putting the same labels on such situations or all experiencing the same feelings within these situations. In examining the shared clothing attributes in Tables 1 through 4 there is a greater amount of agreement between subjects, but here certain descriptive phrases such as "comfortable" appear in nearly all groups of situations. In retrospect, asking subjects how they felt wearing the clothes in the situation may account for these similarities since feeling comfortable should be a common outcome of wearing clothing which the individual feels are appropriate for the situation.

Discussion

In the analyses of data from the males whose results are not presented, the behavioral-appropriateness-based situation factors derived all parallel those factors shown in the tables above, except that for

two of these remaining three male subjects, two "social" factors emerged which might be characterized as structured social situations (in which more formal clothing was worn) and unstructured social situations. The analyses of the data from the eight female subjects also showed reasonably good correspondence between the situational factors of different subjects and between the clothing subjects chose to wear within these situations. As with the male subjects, a social factor and an everyday factor emerged consistently, but with the exception of one subject, the outdoor factor was not obtained. Instead, an organizational activity factor (primarily work and meeting situations) and a special occasions factor were found. As with the male subjects however, it appears that female wardrobe selections were keyed to an average of three situation types. This represents greater situational specificity in clothing selections than the notion of universally acceptable ensembles would allow (even the nearly universal blue jean shows product differentiation keyed to situation types), but a smaller number of situational response patterns than were initially anticipated. Although the present analysis involved a taxonomy of situations rather than clothing ensembles, there were, for instance, fewer apparent clothing types than Holman's (1976) research found which college students were able to discern in perceptions of others' clothing.

If the present results are typical of other college students and if these choices of items from clothing wardrobes are reflected in choices of items for clothing wardrobes, the clothing items which can be regarded as alternatives for common consumption situations are relatively numerous, providing a broad definition of three or four markets in college student clothing. The assumption of consumption choices being a surrogate for

anticipated consumption effects on product purchase, would need to be checked however, since there may be situations which are too isolated and infrequent to emerge as factors but which are important enough to have a major impact on clothing selections. For instance, the timing of the present study is such that even though many of the students were seniors, no job interviews were captured. Nevertheless the importance of this anticipated consumption situation may well have strongly affected clothing purchases following the data collection period.

It might also be thought that the use of diary data and the focus on consumption choices would preclude the fitting of new products into the situational taxonomies derived. However if new product alternatives are shown or described and the subject is asked to include these in the appropriateness matrix, the free response nature of the method may be retained while adding new products to the potential product set. One further caution which normally must be extended in developing situational taxonomies is also handled quite neatly by the present method. The caution is that when dealing with behaviorally based situational taxonomies the apparent situation-behavior effects can be misleading if some of the situation types occur rarely or never for a subject. However, since the subject has generated the input situations from his own experience and since with diary data situational occurrence frequencies may be calculated for weighting, this problem need not occur here. There are still problems when the results indicate that there is not sufficient homogeneity of situational effects to allow dealing with situation types for an aggregate market or for several identifiable submarkets with homogeneous situational effects. But this problem is essentially what the method is intended to detect.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing results were intended to present a limited example of a method recommended for constructing product-specific consumption situation taxonomies relevant to understanding how a group of products may be positioned situationally by consumers. The method may be regarded as a useful exploratory step which can aid in discovering relevant consumption situation types and in assessing the homogeneity of the resulting typologies. By beginning with this free-response approach to situation and product description, the researcher need not begin with assumptions about the situations which are relevant to the consumer, about the salient characteristics of these situations, or about the particular products seen by the consumer as alternatives within any or all of these situations. It is still necessary to broadly define the product class to the consumer initially, and to have these consumers provide longitudinal details on the occurrence of various situations. However this need only be done with a limited number of representative consumers since the analyses are intraindividual. Once a situational typology or typologies have been developed for this initial sample, subsequent aggregate research can be conducted using structured responses to prototypical situational descriptions.

Variations on the methods illustrated may be expected to provide additional insights into the effects of consumption situations on consumer purchases. Pervin (1976) shows how a similar procedure might be used to form a matrix of situations and situational attributes in which the entries are applicability ratings. By analyzing this data, a taxonomy of types of situations based on perceived situational characteristics can then be derived. If the subjects have also provided be-

havioral data as in the current study, the perceptually-based situational taxonomy can be compared to the behaviorally-based situational taxonomy in order to determine whether the perceived differences in situations translate into differences in purchase behavior. Different methods of analysis may also provide further information. Price (1974) illustrated how data like that analyzed here might be subjected to separate cluster analyses for situations and behaviors (product choices) to provide a summary cross-comparison of the appropriateness of different product types in different situation types. However unless the number of product choices is quite large, this additional grouping of choices may not be necessary.

Earlier it was noted that there are parallels between the classification of individual differences and the classification of situational differences. Although the task may be similar, it is apparent that situational classification currently suffers from a substantial lack of research by comparison to individual differences. However unlike individual differences, consumption situational differences may be expected to vary greatly according to the type of consumption being considered. This in turn can greatly simplify the task of constructing situational taxonomies, since it is both simpler and more appropriate to consider product-specific situational effects. The means for assessing such effects and utilizing them in product planning are now at hand and the evidence is growing that an awareness of these effects can aid the prediction and understanding of consumer choice behavior.

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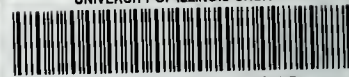
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